Leon Anson Davenport was born May 25, 1937, in Unionville, New York, and grew up in neighboring Butler, New Jersey. He was the 10th born of 12 children.

His father, Harvey Davenport Sr., was a lifetime employee of the Susquehanna Railroad, ending his career as an engineer. His mother, the former Leona Post, "never worked," Leon sometimes told new acquaintances in a hilarious misstatement of reality.

For a number of years as a boy and young man, Leon delivered morning newspapers, investing the fair-gotten gains in automobiles and uniforms for the sandlot baseball team he helped found, the Butler Bullets.

Lamentably stricken with the intractable disease of Yankee fandom at a young age, Leon remained a sports fan throughout his life, eventually mercifully attenuating his Bronx flu through various allegiances in the NFL and the PGA.

A prospective career in a rubber mill was cut short by his Uncle Sam, who informed him in the summer of 1956 that he was slated for service in the United States Army. Preferring blue to green, Leon instead speedily enlisted in the United States Air Force.

After basic training, Leon sought placement at one of several Air Force bases located on the Eastern seaboard. The USAF took this request under careful advisement before stationing him in the territory of Alaska, where he worked in communications.

Towards the end of his four year stint of poorly compensated public service, Leon was transferred to Camp Adair in equally exotic Oregon, where he was assigned to be a nighttime telephone operator for the base. In that capacity he occasionally made use of his communications savvy to con Oregon State College co-eds into going out for coffee.

It was through this early form of on-line dating that he met the social chair of The Pines, a cooperative living group at OSC, Polly Macpherson.

Polly, the daughter of a local farmer, proved unable to find a volunteer among her peers to partake of caffeine and pastry with the crafty young airman, so she did so herself, falling in love and soon finding herself married and living on the wrong coast. A son, Timothy, followed in 1961.

At the urging of a brother, Leon found work in a shoe store, a retail skill which he transferred from New Jersey to the West coast in 1962. A daughter, Kimberly, was born in 1964.

Leon worked in the shoe department of the Miller's Department Stores of Salem and Coquille before being persuaded to depart in

1969 to manage Hornbrook's Shoes of Eureka, California.

In 1977, the 40-year old Leon felt old age encroaching, so he borrowed money and started a shoe store of his own in his wife's hometown of Corvallis. The venture, a shop called The Shoe Hutch, proved successful.

Leon remained at the helm until retiring on January 1, 2000, with his son and daughter-in-law, Angie, taking over the business. The store closed its doors at the end of 2023.

For most of his retirement years, Leon and Polly split their time as sunbirds, with nests in Albany and Benson (later Green Valley), Arizona. The couple enjoyed traveling and made a number of close friends locally and around the Pacific Northwest.

Leon was stricken by dementia during his final years, dying on September 7, 2025, at the age of 88.

Leon was survived by his wife of 65 years, Polly Davenport of Albany; daughter, Kim Townsend of Sierra Vista, Arizona; son, Tim Davenport of Corvallis; as well as two New Jersey-resident sisters, Evelyn Davenport of Wantage and Virginia Russell of Sussex.

The family thanks Evergreen Hospice for delivering excellent end-of-lfe care.

There will be no public funeral. In lieu of flowers, please do something nice for someone today.

I am not a public speaker, which is not just to say that I don't do it, but I won't do it. You don't want to listen to me try to talk anyway — trust me. So a few written words will have to do. —td

About fifteen years ago, give or take, my father Leon had the big idea that he was going to write his memoirs. Not that he had a large local family pining anxiously for tales of the formative years of the Paterfamilias, mind you. Still, as one gets older the desire to leave a concrete legacy becomes important, I think, and somehow he had in his mind that there was a book to be written about his life, for audience unknown.

I was designated to edit and type this as-told-to opus.

This great literary adventure lasted exactly one afternoon. It turns out that Leon did have a handful of good stories about growing up as part of a big family — but invariably these comical accounts were followed with an "oh, but you can't write about this!" or "oh, you can't include that!"

Every interesting and entertaining anecdote was thus neatly excised. The already skimpy lunch being packed was thereby reduced to a very small bread sandwich — and a rather dry one to boot.

Leon's designated typist and editor resigned from the project and his epic as-told-to memoir never happened. That's a pity, I guess.

Here are a couple of the stories that Leon told me, recounted from my distant memory of his very distant memory, with a little poetic license no doubt employed.

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Leon's father, Harvey Davenport Senior, was an engineer on the Susquehanna Railroad — the "Suzie-Q" — leaving in

the morning and getting home late. Leon worked throughout his boyhood years delivering newspapers, working as part of a fairly elaborate operation running and throwing the day's news off the back of a moving pickup truck. He got up *extremely* early for this job, rain or shine, then had school. He rarely saw his father in the morning, sometimes not even seeing him before he had to go to bed at night.

Father and son consequently communicated through notes, generally flowing top-down and limited to instructions of what Leon needed to do around the house and which of his behaviors needed to be modified. As the 10th of 12 kids — for all intents and purposes he was the 10th of 11 since the youngest did not make his entry into the world until very late in the picture — Leon was a baby of the family, with some of his brothers and sisters not only older but *substantially* older than he. With his father gone all day, working long hours to support his brood, Leon developed something of a father–son relationship with his older brother Mel, confessing that he accidentally called Mel "Dad" once.

Mel later moved to Ohio, had five or six children of his own, and died there fairly young from a train-related injury. Whether Mel's death was the result of accident or intention was never made completely clear to me and the details may not have been completely clear to Leon either.

Either way, Mel's death left a lasting scar on Leon, a little hole in his psyche that I don't believe ever completely healed. Leon's dad wasn't really his dad so much as his older brother was.

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Leon — named after his mother, Leona — was closest in age to slightly older brother, Harvey Junior, obviously named after his father. These were players #9 and #10 of the Davenport football team. Maybe Leona and Harvey Senior were running out of names.

Harvey and Leon were of similar ages but were not personally close growing up, having greatly dissimilar personalities. Leon was rough-and-tumble, Harvey was the sort of kid that probably would have collected Star Wars Action Figures, had they been around in the day. Leon played ball with his school pals and periodically got into the little troubles that boys have gotten into from time immemorial. Harvey tended to hang out with his sisters and — *horror of horrors!* — "play with dolls." Or so the tale was told.

But when he was younger, before he emerged as a self-styled junior small town hooligan wannabe, Leon the son of Leona, was a mama's boy. He used to follow his mother around the house and pester her and steal cookies and generally get in the way and make a nuisance of himself. Leona already had her hands full as the mother of a huge family, with food prep, laundry, and cleaning absorbing the major part of her day. She used to serve dinner in shifts and the kids could eat whatever they wanted and skip everything else without repercussions. Leon consequently *never even tried* a vast array of foods and delicacies and had a stunted sense of culinary adventure throughout his life.

Anyway, one day, Leona headed upstairs, putting away folded laundry in a dresser used by one or two of the older boys. Leon followed. Bear in mind that this would be in the middle 1940s, and a couple of the older boys were veterans of World War II. These were not little kids, these were young men checking back in to the home office before going forth and making lives of their own.

Well, you'll never guess what Leona found in the sock drawer of one of her older sons. Or maybe you will...

A package of condoms!

And Little Leon, mama's boy, apron-string tugger, was right there in the room to witness the shocking find.

Hell hath no fury like a Baptist mama unearthing contra-

band contraceptives in a sock drawer... Mama Leona hit the ceiling! She turned beet red! She sputtered and spouted and spun in a circle, furiously enumerating the foibles of her older boys again and again: "Smoking and drinking and chasing after girls! Smoking and drinking and chasing after girls!" She was so mad that she felt ill.

Then she remembered who was with her. She looked down.

"Leon, just you wait and see, you're going to turn out *just like them* — smoking and drinking and chasing after girls!"

Leona was grim, putting her hands on her hips for emphasis and making a face of utter disgust. Hellfire and damnation!

Anxious to please, Little Leon gave the matter a few seconds thought before making his reply. He looked up at his mother, trying hard to reassure her, and delivered a solemn vow.

"Mama, I promise, I swear," declared Little Leon earnestly, "*I will never smoke and drink!"*

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I think I can speak for everyone who ever knew Leon in expressing thanks to the fates that he kept his promise and never did drink. The concept of a drunk Leon still frightens me to this day, even now that he is gone.

While he never did touch a drop of alcohol, it turns out that Little Leon wasn't quite truthful with his mother, however. At some point he did later commit the obligatory rough and tumble youthful offense of nicking some of his father's cigarettes and sneaking off to a nearby culvert to chain-smoke them. The inevitable apprehension and punishment and an actual swearing off of tobacco immediately followed.

He also made use of the exemption he cleverly carved out as a small boy, finding a nice girl to chase, fortunately for me.

Thanks for reading.

Tim Davenport